

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

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AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 4241

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PFOR, UR, VN, VS, CB

SUBJ: SOVIET OFFICIAL ON INDOCHINA

1. SUMMARY: YURI KUZNETSOV, DEPUTY CHIEF OF MFA'S SOUTHEAST ASIA DIVISION, ON MARCH 25 TOOK PAINS TO INDICATE TO POLITICAL COUNSELOR THAT SOVIETS HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM AND CAMBODIA. POLICY OF USSR IN VIETNAM, KUZNETSOV SAID, "HAS BEEN, IS NOW AND , AS FAR AS I KNOW, WILL CONTINUE TO BE" FULL SUPPORT OF THE PARIS AGREEMENT" AND SETTLEMENT OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN PROBLEMS THROUGH NEGOTIATIONS. KUZNETSOV ALSO PLAYED DOWN THE SIGNIFICANCE OF DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER FIRYUBIN'S TRIP TO HANOI AND LAOS AND SAID HE SAW NO REASON WHY VIETNAM SHOULD BECOME A DIVISIVE ISSUE BETWEEN THE U.S. AND USSR. END SUMMARY.

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2. POLITICAL COUNSELOR CALLED ON KUZNETSOV TO DISCUSS

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA. HE INQUIRED ABOUT RECENT TRIP TO AREA BY SOVIET DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER FIRYUBIN. KUZNETSOV, WHO TRAVELED WITH FIRYUBIN, SAID THERE WAS NO SPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE TO THE VISIT TO HANOI. HE STATED THAT A NEW SOVIET AMBASSADOR HAS RECENTLY BEEN INSTALLED IN DRV AND PURPOSE OF FIRYUBIN'S TRIP WAS TO DISCUSS WITH AMBASSADOR CHAPLIN INTERNAL ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS. THERE WERE FEW CONTACTS WITH DRV OFFICIALS DURING THE VISIT TO HANOI AND NONE AT ALL WITH ANY CAMBODIANS THERE, KUZNETSOV SAID. BECAUSE FIRYUBIN'S TRIP WAS UNOFFICIAL, IT HAD NOT BEEN ANNOUNCED PUBLICLY AND THERE HAD BEEN NO COMMUNIQUE, SAID KUZNETSOV. (COMMENT: THE ABOVE WAS CONVEYED WITH A MODERATELY STRAIGHT FACE.)

3. FIRYUBIN'S VISIT TO LAOS WAS AN OFFICIAL ONE AND IN RESPONSE TO THE LONG-STANDING LAO GOVERNMENT INVITATION WHICH FIRYUBIN HAD NOT BEEN ABLE TO FULFILL IN NOVEMBER, KUZNETSOV CONTINUED. HE SAID AID MATTERS AND OVERALL STATE OF SOVIET-LAO RELATIONS HAD BEEN DISCUSSED IN VIENTIANE.

4. POLITICAL COUNSELOR NOTED RECENT UPSURGE OF CRITICISM OF US ACTIONS IN INDOCHINA IN SOVIET PRESS (MOSCOW 4105 AND 3796), AND THE CHARGE IN IZVESTIYA LAST WEEK THAT 25,000 AMERICAN ADVISERS WERE STILL IN SOUTH VIETNAM, WHICH WAS FLATLY UNTRUE. HE ALSO REFERRED TO OTHER CRITICISM VOICED BY HANOI BUT REPEATED IN THE SOVIET PRESS THAT NOT ONLY GVN BUT U.S. AS WELL WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR VIOLATION OF PARIS AGREEMENT. POLITICAL COUNSELOR EXPRESSED THE PERSONAL OPINION THAT THIS TYPE OF REPORTING WAS MOST UNFORTUNATE. HE ALSO EXPRESSED HOPE THAT THE SOVIET PRESS WOULD REPORT U.S. ACTIONS IN VIETNAM, ALL OF WHICH TO HIS KNOWLEDGE WERE AIMED AT BOLSTERING RATHER THAN VIOLATING THE PARIS AGREEMENT, IN AN OBJECTIVE AND TEMPERATE MANNER. AT THIS POINT, WHEN THERE IS NOW WHOLE DRV ARMY OBVIOUSLY OPERATING AGGRESSIVELY IN SOUTH VIETNAM, THERE SHOULD BE NO DOUBT, HE SAID, AS TO WHO BEARS THE PRIME RESPONSIBILITY FOR VIOLATION

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OF PARIS ACCORDS.

5. IN RESPONSE, KUZNETSOV SAID THAT SOVIET PRESS OCCASIONALLY WAS NOT TOTALLY ACCURATE, AS WAS THE CASE ALSO WITH THE AMERICAN PRESS. ON VIETNAM DEVELOPMENTS HE GAVE STANDARD RESPONSE, REITERATING LINE HE HAD TAKEN IN PREVIOUS CONVERSATIONS THAT IF SAIGON SEEKS TO EXPAND ITS AREAS OF CONTROL, THE OTHER SIDE

MUST RESPOND. THE MAIN QUESTION, HE SAID, IS TO MAKE THE PARIS AGREEMENT WORK EFFECTIVELY.

6. KUZNETSOV THEN ASKED ABOUT U.S. VIEW AS TO POPULARITY OF PRESIDENT THIEU, AND AS TO WHETHER THERE WAS POSSIBILITY OF THIRD FORCE DEVELOPING IN SOUTH VIETNAM. POLITICA COUNSELOR RESPONDED THAT FACTS WOULD SEEM TO INDICATE THAT THIEU ENJOYED THE SUPPORT OF THE ARVN AND THAT OUR BEST ESTIMATE WOULD BE THAT HE WOULD WIN A MAJORITY IN ANY FREE AND FAIR ELECTION HELD IN SOUTH VIETNAM. WHAT IS BEYOND DISPUTE, HE CONTINUED, IS THAT THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE PEOPLE HAVE SHOWN NO INDICATION THAT THEY WOULD PREFER TO LIVE UNDER PRG RULE. KUZNETSOV SAID THAT THE TENTATIVE SOVIET VIEW IS THAT THERE WOULD BE WIDE POPULAR SUPPORT FOR A "THIRD FORCE" BUT THAT IT EMERGENCE WOULD ONLY BE POSSIBLE ONCE THIEU DEPARTED FROM THE SCENE.

7. IN A PARTING COMMENT ON CAMBODIA, KUZNETSOV SAID THAT SOVIET POLICY TOWARD THAT COUNTRY HAD NOT CHANGED AND THAT THE USSR STILL SUPPORTS A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT THERE. HE NOTED PRESS REPORTS THAT LON NO MAY BE THINKING OF RESIGNING BUT EXPRESSED SKEPTICISM AS TO WHETHER NEGOTIATIONS WERE NOW POSSIBLE. THE REAL PROBLEM, HE SAID, IS TO FIND OUT WHO SHOULD BE NEGOTIATING WITH WHOM.

8. KUZNETSOV THROUGHOUT CONVERSATION STRESSED SOVIET ADHERENCE TO THE VIEW THAT PARIS AGREEMENT WAS THE ONLY MEANS TO SETTLE THE VIETNAM PROBLEM. THE ONLY OTHER POSSIBILITY WOULD BE THROUGH MILITARY ACTION AND THIS SHOULD BE AVOIDED, KUZNETSOV SAID.
STOESSEL

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